

Present

Charles Bonenti, Kim Burnham, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Cathy Yamamoto (chair)  
Absent: Bilal Ansari

Also present:

Kim Wells (Agricultural Commission)

Stephen Dravis (iBerkshires)

Megan Foley (North Adams Transcript)

Jaime Bairstow, Willinet (live).

**Business**

1. The minutes of the June 5 meeting were approved.

2. Coordination with agriculture.

The Agricultural Commission sent Kim Wells to be its liaison to the Affordable Housing Committee. Kim said that he volunteered for this position because he knows that the Lowry property, which he has hayed for many years, has sometimes been on the table for housing development. Because it is prime agricultural land, which has taken time and investment to create, its current state has value. The committee briefly discussed whether a small part of it could be developed, leaving the agricultural and recreational uses intact, and noted that the development of affordable housing there was recommended by the most recent master plan. Kim's role is to fill us in the the agricultural impact of any decisions we might make.

3. Updates

A. Sites

59 Water Street: Guntlow in charge; test pits dug, no results yet.

Photec: Tighe & Bond in charge, no apparent activity yet.

Cable Mills: no news to report.

B. Activities

1. Rita Farrell (MHP) nominated our selectmen as affordable housing heroes, and they won!

2. The Massachusetts Housing Institute in Devens, MA, was a helpful source of information for Jane Allen, Robin Lenz and Cathy Yamamoto in June

3. Tom Sheldon (select board) will put together a membership list for the Trust, but there is no rush as the legislature still needs to approve its creation at Town Meeting and then the trust deed needs to be registered.

4. Andrew Groff (town planner) got the state to add Church Corners to the town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The number now stands at 147 units, which is 5.24% of the town's stock of housing.
5. HousingUs, a subsidiary of Berkshire Taconic Foundation, produced for Sheffield a handbook showing how to create an accessory apartment, and might be able to produce one for Williamstown as well.

4. Hiring a consultant

- A. Rita Farrell prepared a template "scope of services," which lists activities that development consultants often undertake, from gathering statistics describing the population to be served, to site design and planning, financial feasibility, and helping to prepare an RFP.
- B. The committee agreed that understanding the nature of the population to be served was the right place to start. The committee already has some of this information.
- C. Van pointed out that in our specific hiring request we might list the exact products that we want, not just the activities we want to consultant to engage in.
- D. If money gets tight, we might want to know which tasks take many hours (and are therefore expensive) versus which are relatively cheap.
- E. Services under \$25,000 do not require an RFP but do need at least three bids in response to a solicitation.

5. Background work before soliciting bids:

- A. Van and Cathy will take an inventory of the demographic information we already have so that we don't have to pay someone to repeat this. They will also identify the holes in the information.
- B. Charles will get in touch with Regional Planning, Elton Ogden, and Peter Lafayette to see whom they recommend we contact.
- C. Van will call people in Vermont and some feds.
- D. Cathy will ask Stockbridge and Lenox what they have done.
- E. The list as it now stands includes the Women's Institute, John Ryan, the Caleb Foundation, and Berkshire Housing.

6. As punishment for forgetting our meeting, Bilal has been assigned to be our committee's liaison to the Housing Authority.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 24, 7:00 pm, Town Hall**